

THE GREAT ANTI-VIRUS RIP-OFF!

If you think a £50 market-leading security package will protect your PC, you'd be wrong. **Simon Edwards** unleashes a plague of viruses on the best-known anti-virus programs – with frightening results

Viruses are a threat to your computer. More specifically, they are a threat to your files, your privacy and even your bank balance. Long gone are the days when vandals sent out programs simply to damage your PC. Now there is strong evidence that organised criminals are involved in creating viruses, attempting to steal valuable information or your internet connection for nefarious purposes.

Once upon a time, the worst-case virus scenario was a rude message on your monitor and a formatted hard disk. Now you may not even know that your PC has been infected with a virus until your bank account has been cleaned out. That is the bad news; however, there are a number of ways that you can protect yourself. One of the most useful things you can do is buy and install a good anti-virus program.

Every anti-virus company claims that its products will protect your PC, but who can you trust? This month we have tested all the leading anti-virus programs, plus a number of others that you may not have heard of. Unlike most computer magazines, we have actually tested these programs by throwing hundreds of recent viruses, Trojans and spyware files at each one over email and via the web.

The results are astounding, and we're willing to bet many of you will change the anti-virus software you are using after reading these reviews. If you subscribe to any of the world-leading packages, we'd advise you to read on carefully. We're almost certain you'll be as taken aback as we were by the results.

TESTING TIMES

Testing anti-virus software is a controversial subject. Some anti-virus companies have complained that, by handling live viruses, we are being 'unethical'. Some don't believe us when we say their products do not detect certain files and demand proof, which we are happy to provide. Others point out that the number of viruses used by computer magazines is so small as to generate meaningless results. Many magazines don't even bother testing with real viruses and instead rely on the veracity of the certificates awarded to products by the security industry (see *Rants & Raves* on page 200).

There are many different ways to test anti-virus software and we believe that, at the very least, our method (see page 131) demonstrates that it is disingenuous for anti-virus companies to claim that their products provide 100 per cent protection.

Moving forward Spyware and integration

Threats on the internet evolve as online criminals explore different ways to attack PCs or trick users into running malicious software. It's become common for hackers to store so-called spyware programs on websites. These programs masquerade as legitimate software (ironically, often as anti-spyware utilities), pornography, pirated versions of popular packages or may secretly install themselves without their victim's knowledge. Once they have infected a system, they may steal personal information but generally do not spread. Because of this, they are not classified as viruses.

Nevertheless, anti-virus companies believe the spyware threat is one they should address. This means most anti-virus programs on the market claim to detect and remove spyware as well as

regular viruses and Trojans. This makes sense. As users we don't want to have to distinguish between viruses, Trojans, spyware and other badware. It's all unwanted and our anti-virus software should stop it.

Not only are anti-virus and anti-spyware programs starting to combine, but firewalls are increasingly being included with anti-virus software. McAfee, one of the three largest anti-virus companies in the world, no longer supplies an anti-virus-only package. VirusScan Plus is the most basic package available and includes a firewall. Symantec, the world's market-leading anti-virus company, also includes a limited firewall in its Norton AntiVirus program. This is part of its so-called worm protection system and is akin to the application control available in personal firewall programs such as ZoneAlarm.

SOFTWARE LABS

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▲ Avast! 4.7 Home Edition may have an unusual interface, but its virus detection is below average

ALWIL Avast! 4.7 Home Edition

★★

Free

Alwil's free anti-virus software now supports Windows Vista, putting it in the minority of current anti-virus programs for use at home. It comes with a choice of interfaces, including a media player-style default and a more conventional set of windows for changing the program's settings. Skins are available to customise its appearance. Upgrading to the professional version adds an 'enhanced interface' along with other features. The Pro version costs around £25, and you must pay this to use the software commercially rather than for home use.

Avast! 4.7 Home Edition has lots of settings compared to Grisoft's free AVG anti-virus software, so it seems an attractive option. It also has a so-called Virus Recovery Database to help repair infected program files. Avast! users may find this last feature particularly useful.

When we last tested Avast! we used version 4.6. We were concerned about its poor virus detection, which was the worst we've seen. We'd hoped that the latest version would be much improved. Sadly, Avast! 4.7 Home Edition again came last, detecting just 60 per cent of the email viruses. It beat three other programs in the web-based threat test, finding 22 per cent of the infected files, twice as many as Panda Antivirus. However, this is still below the average and well below the 40 per cent and higher figures the leading products were able to achieve. To be fair, Alwil does not explicitly claim that Avast! detects spyware, although it implies so on its website, where it highlights the increasing threat of spyware and discusses Avast!'s web filter.

It might be free and have a snazzy interface, but we require that our anti-virus software detects lots of threats, and Avast! doesn't cut it. If you want to install a free anti-virus program, AVG is better. However, we think anti-virus software is one area where you really have to spend money rather than relying on freebies.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Interesting interface
- ✗ Poor email virus detection
- ✗ Worse spyware detection

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 95/98/Me/2000/XP/Vista, 486 processor, 32MB RAM, 50MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.avast.com
DETAILS www.avast.com



▲ BullGuard 7 is a marked improvement on its predecessor and offers a good support service

BULLGUARD BullGuard 7

ANTI-VIRUS RATING ★★★★★
£35 inc VAT

BullGuard 7 is an internet security suite that combines anti-virus and spyware protection with a firewall, anti-spam software and an online backup service. We have tested its ability to detect viruses and spyware. The whole package is bundled into a single interface that feels cramped at times. Last year, we reviewed version 6.1 and criticised it for poor virus detection. Is this latest version, which uses BitDefender's anti-virus engine, an improvement?

In a word, yes. BullGuard detected 73 per cent of our email viruses and 31 per cent of the web-based threats. As you might expect, this is virtually identical to BitDefender's results. This detection rate is almost exactly average compared to the other systems here. This might sound underwhelming, but the previous version of BullGuard performed much worse.

Now BullGuard is snapping at the heels of McAfee and Symantec and actually beats the products from both of these market leaders when it comes to web-based threats. It detected fractionally fewer email viruses than both, but twice as many web-based threats as McAfee VirusScan.

If you think that, at £35, BullGuard 7 looks expensive compared to some of the others, remember it is a complete internet security suite and that the prices we have printed for McAfee VirusScan Plus and Norton AntiVirus are great deals from Amazon.co.uk. If you buy either product from their official websites, you are looking at £40 for each. Norton AntiVirus doesn't even include a fully featured firewall.

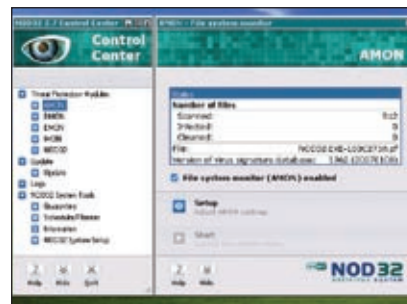
The BullGuard package also includes a support service that covers more than just product support. Licensed users of the software can ask just about any computer security-related question and hope for an answer within the hour.

The renewal cost of £30 is a bit steep, but overall this is a good security bundle that includes everything you need to keep a Windows PC secure at a reasonable price.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Lots of features
- ✓ Much-improved detection rates
- ✗ Expensive to renew

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/2000, 900MHz processor, 128MB RAM
SUPPLIER www.bullguard.com
DETAILS www.bullguard.com



▲ NOD32 2.7 uses a modular approach, supports scheduled scans and has lots of settings

ESET NOD32 2.7

★★★★★

£27 inc VAT

We always get a sense of déjà vu when testing NOD32. The unusual interface of past versions remains and it won't appeal to everyone, but that's certainly not the most important factor when choosing an anti-virus program. The version we tested was for Windows 2000, XP and Vista; there is also a version for older operating systems from Windows 95 up to Me. You can even get a version for MS-DOS.

The program uses a modular approach, with different windows available to change settings for the email, document, real-time and on-demand scanners. It supports scheduled scans and there are tons of settings to play with. This will be of more interest to serious hobbyists than regular users who just want to install a program and leave it to run in the background.

The ability to create and switch between profiles is a nice touch. This lets you make changes to settings and apply them quickly and easily. You could load strict settings for times when you believe your PC is most at risk and choose a more relaxed profile when the emergency is over.

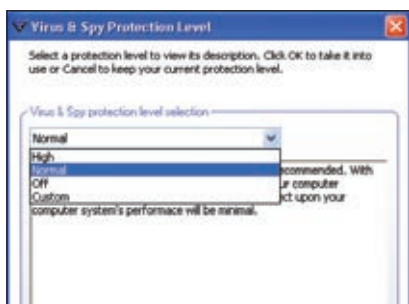
The last time we tested NOD32, it impressed us with its accuracy and, in our latest and most comprehensive tests, it holds on to its position as one of the front-runners. It detected 76 per cent of the email viruses and 46 per cent of the web-based threats. This means that its email virus detection is in the top five, just beating the Norton and McAfee products. It is also one of the better programs for detecting spyware and similar files, and is just beaten by Kaspersky and Steganos. NOD32's results are virtually identical to those of F-Secure Anti-Virus, which costs £5 more. NOD32 put less strain on our test system than F-Secure's product did.

NOD32 is a serious contender to win this anti-virus group test. However, we cannot ignore the fact that Steganos not only detects more email viruses but costs significantly less to buy and renew.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Good spyware detection
- ✓ Doesn't hog system resources
- ✗ More expensive than Steganos AntiVirus

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, Pentium processor, 32MB RAM, 30MB disk space
SUPPLIER Eset 08458 380832
DETAILS www.eset.com



▲ Anti-Virus 2007 offers good virus protection although cheaper programs do better

F-SECURE Anti-Virus 2007

★★★★★
£28 inc VAT

Looking much the same as previous versions, F-Secure's latest anti-virus software has a clean interface with straightforward sliders to control security levels and lots of options for setting scheduled scans and automatic updates. There's a lot going on behind the simple façade, however, so you'll need a reasonably fast computer on which to run it.

F-Secure's anti-virus software has done consistently well in our tests for the past few years, detecting some of the more obscure or disguised samples we've used to bamboozle anti-virus software. With this in mind, we were surprised to see how it performed when scanning our virus-infected emails. Although its 78 per cent detection rate was better than most, and significantly superior to the likes of Avast! or PC-cillin, it wasn't close to the 90 per cent mark achieved by Kaspersky Anti-Virus and Steganos, both of which use Kaspersky technology. F-Secure's result is strange because its software combines a number of anti-virus engines, including Kaspersky's.

F-Secure Anti-Virus did well in the web-based threat test, detecting 43 per cent of the files. Combined with the email score this places its average detection rating well ahead of that achieved by McAfee VirusScan and Norton AntiVirus. While this program detected a total of 78 web-based threats, only 58 of these were discovered by the web scanner. We had to run a manual scan to find the other 20. All the other programs missed files with their web scanners then found them with a manual scan but, with the exception of AVG, F-Secure missed and then subsequently found the most.

This product's price is not the lowest, but it does include a licence to install the software on three PCs. As more of us have multiple PCs at home, this could save a fair amount of money in the long run. With its relatively good virus and spyware detection, F-Secure is one of the best we've seen but is beaten by cheaper and more accurate anti-virus products.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Reasonable detection
- ✓ May be installed on three PCs
- ✗ Can't match some less-expensive competitors

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 600MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 500MB disk space
SUPPLIER F-Secure 08458 903300
DETAILS www.f-secure.com



▲ Despite its old-fashioned interface, AVG Anti-Virus Free is effective – and it's free

GRISOFT AVG Anti-Virus Free 7.5

★★★★★
Free

One of the first anti-virus programs we've seen that supports Windows Vista, AVG is also notable for its free availability. Home users can download and install this software for nothing and, despite an old-fashioned interface, there is much to like about this program.

If you use Windows 95, 98 or Me, AVG can generate a rescue disk. This is a floppy disk that contains important information about your hard disk and may help restore an infected hard disk. This feature does not work with NTFS-based installations and is not available in Windows XP.

Some of its features, including scheduling, are basic, but upgrading to the Professional version makes more options available. Upgrading costs around £19 for one year.

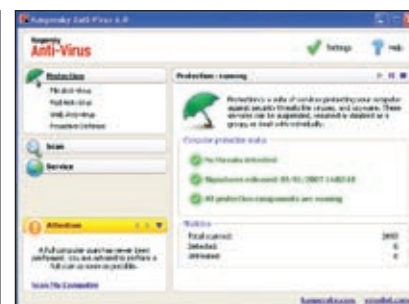
In contrast to Avast!, the other free scanner here, AVG is accurate in detecting viruses and spyware. Its email virus detection rate is not great, but it beats PC-cillin and Avast!, and it's not far off BitDefender's result. In total, it found 67 per cent of our email viruses and a staggering 49 per cent of the web-based threats. That makes it the most accurate product on test when protecting against spyware and similar programs, just beating its closest rivals Kaspersky Anti-Virus and NOD32. It roundly thrashes expensive products such as Norton AntiVirus and McAfee VirusScan.

Even considering the lacklustre email detection, AVG is better than its free rival Avast! and beats many paid-for options with the notable exceptions of Kaspersky Anti-Virus, Steganos AntiVirus, F-Secure Anti-Virus and NOD32. We would pick one of these four to install on a system but, if you really can't afford them and choose AVG, you can take comfort in the fact that your free software is better than the less accurate and more hardware-demanding offerings you'll find on the high street.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Free
- ✓ Good spyware protection
- ✗ Below-average virus detection

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP/Vista, 486 processor, 32MB RAM, 30MB disk space
SUPPLIER Grisoft 01636 700496
DETAILS <http://free.grisoft.com>



▲ Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6 is slick, easy to use and accurate at identifying threats

KASPERSKY LAB Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6

★★★★★
£28 inc VAT

Kaspersky Anti-Virus combines a straightforward interface with slick reporting, advanced settings and accurate threat detection. It is the only program reviewed here, with the exception of the identical Steganos AntiVirus, that lets you create a bootable CD complete with virus scanner and the latest updates. This is invaluable should you need to attempt to recover a heavily infected PC.

Family-friendly features include a password-protection option to prevent others turning off protection, and there is an email notification system so you can get messages from other people's PCs should they encounter a virus. The Update system can be used manually or automatically. Kaspersky provides frequent, large updates so turning this to manual is handy if you are using the internet over slow and expensive connections such as GPRS.

In our previous anti-virus tests, Kaspersky's products, or those with Kaspersky technology at their heart, stood out as being able to detect all our samples accurately. Previously, these have included home-spun hostile scripts and disguised Trojans. We expected great things of this program, and we weren't disappointed.

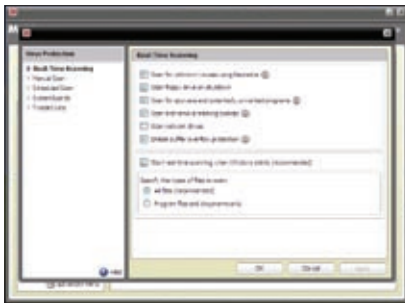
Not only was it the most accurate here for detecting email viruses but it was nearly the most accurate at finding spyware, where it was just beaten by AVG. It found 91 per cent of email viruses and 48 per cent of web-based threats, giving an average detection rate of 73 per cent, head and shoulders above the competition. Norton AntiVirus averaged 55 per cent and McAfee VirusScan 50 per cent.

It doesn't cost the earth, either, so we would be more than happy to shell out and install it on our personal systems. There is only one thing stopping us from giving Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6 our top award, and that is the fact that you can buy precisely the same software, albeit with a different logo, from Steganos for £8 less.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Unbeaten levels of protection
- ✓ Reasonable price
- ✗ More expensive than identical rival

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
SUPPLIER Kaspersky 08700 113461
DETAILS www.kaspersky.co.uk



▲ McAfee's VirusScan Plus 2007 is simple to use but its detection is below average

McAfee VirusScan Plus 2007

ANTI-VIRUS RATING ★★☆☆
£20 inc VAT

We've been testing McAfee anti-virus software for years and, for a long time, VirusScan has looked much the same, save for a change of interface colour. However, the software has now been completely redesigned. It is much simpler to use and we're glad to see an end to the awkward registration system that plagued the earlier versions. It's slightly more expensive than it used to be, but currently you can buy it at half price from Amazon.co.uk. It includes anti-spyware protection and also comes with a firewall, which is a bonus.

It is no longer possible to buy a plain anti-virus program from McAfee. VirusScan Plus is the closest you can get, but you don't have to use the firewall. If you have another firewall that you prefer, you can choose to exclude McAfee's during the installation procedure.

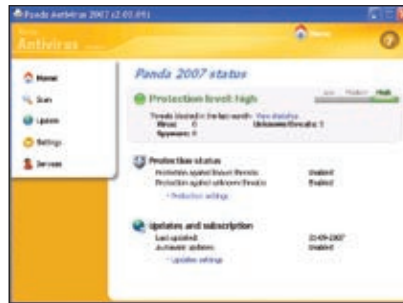
The email virus detection rate of this software was, in our tests, average. It found 75 per cent of the viruses, which is a little worrying considering that this is one of the world's market-leading anti-virus products. What makes us even more concerned is that VirusScan's spyware protection was one of the least accurate in this group of products. It found just 16 per cent of the web-based threats. Only Panda Antivirus did worse and AVG, which is free, found over three times as many bad files.

Even with a reduced price of £20, McAfee's latest anti-virus program failed to impress us. Steganos costs the same and detects lots more viruses. If, for some reason, you are only willing to install a brand of security software that you recognise, bear in mind that Norton AntiVirus found nearly twice as many web-based threats as VirusScan. Neither is particularly good value for money, though, and we'd advise anyone who uses these products to consider a more accurate and less expensive alternative when it is time to renew the software's licence.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✗ Below-average detection
- ✗ Poor value

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 300MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 125MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.mcafee.com/uk



▲ Trojans created problems for Panda's Antivirus 2007; however, it did well spotting email viruses

PANDA SOFTWARE Antivirus 2007

★★★★
£17 inc VAT

Panda's anti-virus software often receives good reviews because it has a friendly interface and it lacks the complicated settings of some of its rivals. However, for some time now we have been giving Panda Antivirus a hard time. We have been criticising it for failing to detect many of the samples we've thrown at it, and for being rather expensive. Specifically, Panda Antivirus has had problems detecting Trojans. We didn't really have high hopes for this latest version, either. Having said all that, our test results were surprising.

Well, we were sort of surprised. Our web-based threat test demonstrated once more that Panda Antivirus's ability to detect Trojans and similar files is not the best. In fact, it was the worst by miles, and detected only 11 per cent of the files. If you already use this software then we strongly recommend that you invest in a good anti-spyware program to protect you from web-based malicious files; if you are having difficulty choosing one then you should read our anti-spyware Labs in *Shopper* October 2006.

However, the biggest surprise for us was that, despite its poor spyware and Trojan detection, Panda Antivirus did incredibly well in the email virus test, picking up 89 per cent of the files. This is comparable with the accuracy displayed by Kaspersky Anti-Virus and Steganos AntiVirus, and is far better than the rest of the competition.

Panda Antivirus is reasonably priced, particularly when you consider that the cost includes a licence to install it on two PCs. The fact that its email virus detection rate is so high means that it is worth considering, particularly if you have already paid for a good anti-spyware utility such as AVG Anti-Spyware 7.5 (formerly known as ewido) to look after the spyware side of things. Panda really needs to improve this area of its software before we can recommend it, though.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Great email virus detection
- ✓ Reasonably priced
- ✗ Very poor spyware detection

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, 150MHz processor, 64MB RAM, 110MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.pandasoftware.com
DETAILS www.pandasoftware.com



▲ BitDefender Antivirus gave nearly the same results as BullGuard 7 but looks very different

SOFTWIN BitDefender Antivirus 10

★★★★
£30 inc VAT

BitDefender Antivirus is a newcomer to our lab, although we have previously tested versions of the BullGuard security suite, which contained the BitDefender anti-virus engine. As such, it is not really all that surprising that it achieved nearly the same overall results as BullGuard 7. It looks very different, though. It has a clear interface that makes accessing the settings straightforward and, when it detects an email-borne virus, it includes some useful detail in the message after it removes the infected attachment.

BitDefender Antivirus's email virus detection is not earth-shatteringly good and, with a detection rate of 68 per cent in our tests, it's below the average here. It actually found fewer email viruses than BullGuard, which is odd. It did slightly better than BullGuard at detecting the web-based threats, though, identifying 34 per cent of the problems compared to BullGuard's 31 per cent detection rate. In terms of finding viruses, there is little overall difference between the two.

BitDefender Antivirus is a standalone anti-virus program, whereas BullGuard includes a firewall, anti-spam and access to a backup service. This means that BitDefender Antivirus might appear quite expensive considering it costs only £5 less than BullGuard. However, the price includes updates for two years and you are allowed to install the software on two PCs at the same time. If you have two PCs, then in effect you are buying anti-virus detection for £7.50 a year per PC. The renewal price is £23 for a further two years, which is again attractive.

Despite the surprisingly low running costs of this package, we cannot ignore BitDefender Antivirus's distinctly average threat detection rates. If you really can't stretch to Steganos's price, the free AVG software is a better choice than BitDefender.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Great price
- ✓ Clear interface
- ✗ Not-so-great virus detection

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, 350MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 60MB disk space
SUPPLIER Softwin 08451 305096
DETAILS www.bitdefender.com



▲ The email detection rate provided by AntiVirus 2007 is outstanding

STEGANOS AntiVirus 2007

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT



No, we haven't made a mistake with the screenshot above. Steganos AntiVirus 2007 is exactly the same software as Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6 with some very minor cosmetic changes. This means that customers can buy the very latest version of the most accurate anti-virus software we've seen at a reduced price of £20. That is a bargain.

Despite the fact that both Kaspersky and Steganos products were updated with the latest virus definitions at the same time for our tests, there was a slight difference in their detection rates. The difference is so small as to be negligible, but it's still an interesting anomaly. Steganos missed one email virus that Kaspersky caught, and ignored five of the web threats.

Overall, though, the twins' email detection rate of 90 per cent beats every other product tested here, and absolutely thrashes better-known brands such as McAfee and Norton. The web-based threat detection was also significantly better than the market leaders and was rivalled only by F-Secure Anti-Virus, NOD32 and AVG. It found 45 per cent of the spyware and similar files.

There are a couple of security features that are not enabled by default. These include Application Integrity Control and Registry Guard. The former monitors critical parts of the operating system and can warn you if some malicious code tries to change them. The Registry Guard intercepts attempts to change the Windows Registry.

The program is easy to use, has all the features highlighted in the Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6 review on page 127 and its annual renewal price of £12 is hard to beat. Add to this its impressive virus-detection rates, and choosing an anti-virus program to run on a home PC becomes an easy task. You'd be mad to ignore this deal.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Powerful protection against viruses
- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Not yet compatible with Windows Vista

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98/Me/2000/XP, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.steganos.co.uk
DETAILS www.steganos.co.uk



▲ Norton AntiVirus has a cast-iron reputation, but the results of our tests were disappointing

SYMANTEC Norton AntiVirus 2007

★★★

£27 inc VAT

Norton AntiVirus has been around for years and there's a good chance you've used it at some point. Symantec is the market leader worldwide, closely followed by McAfee. You'd think such a popular product would be astoundingly good at detecting viruses. However, in previous tests we've found its detection abilities to be patchy. Our latest tests are more stringent than ever before and the results are nothing less than shocking.

Norton AntiVirus only detected 75 per cent of the email viruses that we downloaded to the target system. This is the same number as its rival McAfee, but far fewer than lesser-known brands such as Kaspersky, F-Secure and Panda. For the number one anti-virus program in the world to detect only three-quarters of a sample of real, current viruses is scandalous.

The web-based threat test was nearly as disheartening. Norton AntiVirus detected 28 per cent of the files, making it more accurate than McAfee VirusScan but significantly less effective than most of its competitors. When a free anti-virus utility detects nearly twice as many you know that something is very wrong.

Symantec has changed the look and feel of Norton AntiVirus. We preferred the old interface to the new one, which feels a bit like navigating a webpage using hyperlinks rather than a regular program with buttons. It's not a real problem, though, and it is possible to view all the important settings from one place.

Norton AntiVirus's results are almost exactly average in this labs test, although they are much lower than the best on offer. If you are happy to have a basic level of protection then this program will do the job, but it's worth remembering that you are going to pay for the privilege. The full, official price of £40 can be reduced to £27 if you buy from Amazon.co.uk, but we'd rather pay even less for Steganos and get much better protection into the bargain.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✗ Underwhelming virus detection
- ✗ Expensive

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP, Pentium processor, 256MB RAM, 180MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.amazon.co.uk
DETAILS www.symantec.co.uk



▲ It may be one of the most popular programs, but PC-cillin was not the most reliable in tests

TREND MICRO PC-cillin Internet Security 2007

ANTI-VIRUS RATING ★★

£50 inc VAT

PC-cillin is one of the most popular anti-virus programs in the world, although it is much more so in Japan than in Europe. It's worth mentioning this fact because an anti-virus product that is used by so many people really ought to be good at its job. Failing to be effective will mean that the millions of PCs on which it is installed will be vulnerable to all kinds of viruses that will then spread to other computers.

The PC-cillin virus scanner is part of an internet security suite that contains a good anti-spam scanner and a firewall as well as some privacy tools. If you think that the price looks a little heavy, you should bear in mind that the licence allows the software to be installed on three PCs. You can even use one PC to manage the security of the others over the network, and this is a very nice touch.

So far so good, but how did the anti-virus system perform in our tests? Sadly, the answer is: abysmally. With the exception of the free Avast!, PC-cillin was the least accurate product that we tested. It found just 65 per cent of the email viruses it downloaded from our server and a pitiful 16 per cent of the web-based threats. This is an astoundingly poor result for a piece of popular commercial software and it adds further support to our evidence that market leaders don't always provide the best products available.

Because of these dreadful test results, we simply couldn't recommend PC-cillin, even if the anti-spam and firewall elements were brilliant. If you do have three PCs then you can equip each with a copy of Steganos for only slightly more than the cost of this package. You will, of course, still need to fork out for a personal firewall and anti-spam software, but we think that this is a worthwhile expense to bear.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✗ Poor virus and spyware detection
- ✗ Expensive

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 350MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 250MB disk space
SUPPLIER Trend Micro 01628 400500
DETAILS Trend Micro 01628 400500

How we test Anti-virus software

All our security tests are run in a purpose-built, secure lab. The target systems are standard Windows XP Professional Edition PCs with the latest Microsoft updates and the default settings enabled. An anti-virus program is installed on each and updated to the latest virus definitions and other updates. We don't change the default settings, so our test results show how effective the programs are for regular customers who don't want to mess around with advanced security options.

We tested each program's ability to detect viruses, Trojans and spyware. We ran two sets of tests. The first test aims to see how effective each product is at detecting email viruses, a huge threat to PCs in homes and small businesses. The second uses spyware and other web-based threats.

THE EMAIL VIRUS TEST

We obtained samples of viruses collected by the email scanning systems at MessageLabs.

One way that these detect viruses is to look at patterns in email traffic. This makes it possible to discover new viruses without having to spend a long time testing each file.

All 251 of these real-life viruses were spreading across the internet at the time that we ran our tests. Each file had been detected in the wild within the previous two weeks. The target systems each used Outlook Express to download every virus from our virus email server. Each virus was attached to a separate email message. We observed how the anti-virus software handled infected messages and counted how many it detected.

THE SPYWARE TEST

Just before starting the tests we downloaded 183 malware programs from the web. These malicious files were stored on a web server in our lab and each target system was programmed to download the files over the network. Most anti-virus programs should

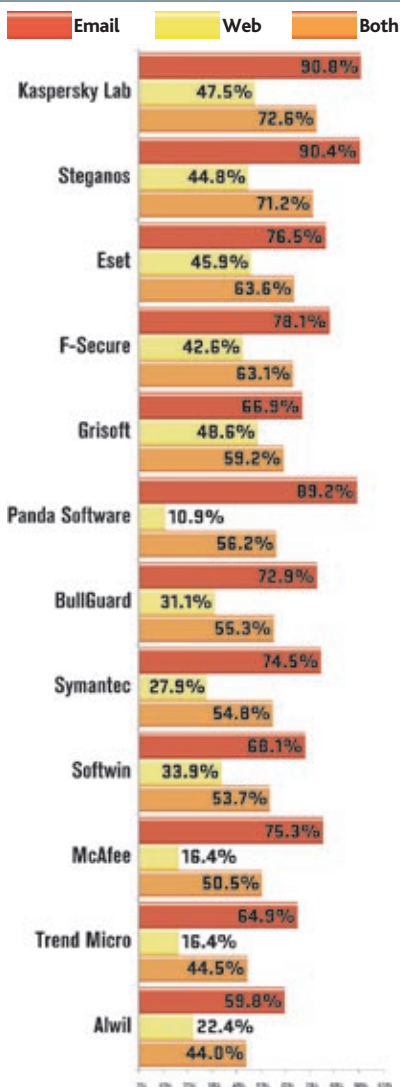
detect infected files as they are downloaded or, at the very least, as soon as they are saved to the hard disk.

To make the test as fair as possible, we waited until the anti-virus software on each target system had finished, then ran a manual scan against the remaining, undetected files. The detection rate for spyware is the combined result of the web scanner and the manual scan.

THE RESULTS

Our graphs show three results for each product: the percentage of email-borne viruses it detected, the percentage of web-based threats it identified and the average percentage. As the graph shows, all the products tested here are significantly better at finding email viruses than they are at handling spyware. The overall average for email virus detection is 76 per cent, while web-based threat detection is 32 per cent.

Detection rates % success



When we say that a scanner detected 75 per cent of email viruses, we mean that on the day we tested it, with the recent viruses we hold in stock, it detected 75 per cent of them.

Labs verdict Anti-virus software

What anti-virus software are you running? If it's one of the programs we've tested here, we hope it's Kaspersky Anti-Virus 6, Steganos 2007, F-Secure Anti-Virus 2007 or Eset's NOD32 2.7. These are the very best money can buy, detecting most samples we fired at them. Steganos 2007 is the best value of them all, although if you have three PCs to protect the slightly less accurate F-Secure Anti-Virus will work out cheaper. Grisoft's AVG Anti-Virus Free 7.5 deserves a special mention because, although it's not

as accurate as the above options, it does a better job than most rivals and it is free for home users.

It is a sad situation when the home anti-virus products from the three world leaders, Symantec, McAfee and Trend Micro, fail to impress. Norton AntiVirus and McAfee VirusScan are distinctly average and PC-cillin's virus detection abilities are poor. If you are using any of these, we recommend that you replace them as soon as possible with an alternative from the above list. **CS**

MANUFACTURER	ALWIL	BULLGUARD	ESET	F-SECURE	GRISOFT	KASPERSKY LAB
Product	Avast! 4.7 Home Edition	BullGuard 7	NOD32 2.7	Anti-Virus 2007	AVG Anti-Virus Free 7.5	Anti-Virus 6
Anti-virus rating	★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
SCANNERS						
Email	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
IM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Rescue disc	No	No	No	Bootable CD	No	Yes
BUYING INFORMATION						
Price including VAT	Free	£35	£27	£28	Free	£28
Licences	N/A	One PC, one year	One PC, one year	Three PCs, one year	N/A	One PC, one year
Renewal (one year)	N/A	£30	£16	£20	N/A	£19
Supplier	www.avast.com	www.bullguard.com	Eset 08458 380832	F-Secure 08458 903300	Grisoft 01636 700496	Kaspersky 08700 113461
Website	www.avast.com	www.bullguard.com	www.eset.com	www.f-secure.com	http://free.grisoft.com	www.kaspersky.co.uk

MANUFACTURER	McAfee	PANDA SOFTWARE	SOFTWIN	STEGANOS	SYMANTEC	TREND MICRO
Product	VirusScan Plus 2007	Antivirus 2007	BitDefender Antivirus 10	AntiVirus 2007	Norton AntiVirus 2007	PC-cillin Internet Security 2007
Anti-virus rating	★★★	★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	★★
SCANNERS						
Email	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Web	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IM	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rescue disc	No	No	Bootable CD	Yes	Bootable CD	No
BUYING INFORMATION						
Price including VAT	£20	£17	£30	£20	£27	£50
Licences	One PC, one year	Two PCs, one year	Two PCs, two years	One PC, one year	One PC, one year	Three PCs, one year
Renewal (one year)	TBA	£14	£23 (2 years)	£12	£30	£50
Supplier	www.amazon.co.uk	www.pandasoftware.com	Softwin 08451 305096	www.steganos.co.uk	www.amazon.co.uk	Trend Micro 01628 400500
Website	www.mcafee.com/uk	www.pandasoftware.com	www.bitdefender.com	www.steganos.co.uk	www.symantec.co.uk	www.trendmicro.com